

university, the crown prince congratulated members of the mob on their bravery. Since the king's special prestige in Thailand depends partly on his being "above politics," the current suspicions of royal involvement in the coup may do much to undermine the symbolic power of the monarchy to command the loyalty of the Thai people.

With the departure since the coup of large numbers of Bangkok intellectuals to join the communist guerrilla fighters in the countryside and the continued inability of the military junta to resolve the fundamental issues facing Thailand, it is clear that a long and bitter struggle lies ahead. The sheer force available to the military and police and their willingness to use it ruthlessly—demonstrated on October 6—will make their ouster a painfully slow process. At the same time, their priority on suppressing communism and monopolizing power and wealth leaves neither resources nor the will to deal with the grievances of Thailand's workers and peasants. It also precludes compromise with those who seek a different future for Thailand. ■

FOOTNOTES

This article was prepared by IRC staff member Martha Winnacker on the basis of information and analysis contained in E. Thadeus Flood, "The United States and the Military Coup in Thailand: A Background Study" (IRC, 1976) and Peter F. Bell and Maxwell Brem, "Imperialism, Class Formation and the Contradictions of Development in Thailand" (unpublished manuscript). Footnotes are to specific sources cited in these articles or consulted independently but do not refer to the articles themselves.

1. Don Luce notes that in the three years after 1973 the U.S. sent \$150 million in military aid to Thailand, while reducing economic aid from \$39 million in 1973 to \$17 million in 1975. ("Thailand: How the U.S. Engineered a Coup," *Win*, October 21, 1976) Using documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Michael Klare discovered that U.S. sales of military equipment to Thailand averaged \$6 million per year in Fiscal Years (FY) 1971-73 and jumped to \$20.5 million in FY 1974. For FY 1975 the figure was \$11.4 million, and in FY 1976 it was \$89.6 million, more than Thailand had purchased in the past 25 years combined. Thailand began buying military supplies on credit in FY 1975, borrowing \$8 million in that year and \$36.7 million in FY 1976. The purchases have included airplanes, helicopters and armored cars for counterinsurgency use as well as weapons. (Manuscript published in several places, including *Ampo* (8:3) and *Liberation News Service*)
2. Pridi Phanomyang, who had headed Thailand's anti-Japanese underground, was the key figure in the democratic governments that ruled Thailand from 1944 to 1947. A non-ideological socialist, Pridi advocated nationalization of land and redistribution of wealth and cooperated actively with the Viet Minh in Vietnam. While work on a Thai constitution was underway in 1946, Pridi asked members of the American mission in Bangkok to supply him with literature on democratic government and copies of foreign constitutions. (See Russell H. Fifield, *Americans in Southeast Asia* (N.Y.: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 97.)
3. Frank Darling, *Thailand and the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1965). Cited in Bell and Brem.
4. Flood provides a detailed account of the CIA's relations with Gen. Phao based on revelations in the Thai press during the past three years.
5. For a detailed discussion of these concerns see Fifield, pp. 68-71, 251-52.
6. This tale of the U.S. decision to switch its support from one client general to another was detailed by a former police official just before the coup in a series of articles in *Chaturat*. Cited in Flood.
7. Thanat made these charges in an article in one of Thailand's leading intellectual journals, *Sangkomsat Parithat* (May 1973). Cited in Flood.
8. For a technical economic discussion of this problem, see James C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1970* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1971), pp. 288-99.

9. *Asian Survey*, XIV:5 (May 1973), 466. Cited in Bell.
10. Reported in *Sangkomsat Parithat* (February 1974). Cited in Flood.
11. *Chaturat*, (Feb. 17, 1976). Cited in Flood. Flood also notes that the CIA Chief of Station (COS) in Bangkok between 1973 and mid-1976 was an old hand at "destabilization." Bernardo Hugh Tovar worked in the Philippines in the 1950s with the CIA's Col. Edward Lansdale; was COS in Jakarta in 1964, one year before the coup there installed a repressive military government; and was COS in Vientiane during a polarization process in the early 1970s. High Thai officials revealed in February 1974 (*Sangkomsat Parithat*) that he was an old acquaintance of Praphat. In February 1976 former Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman attended Tovar's first wedding anniversary celebration. (Reported in *Chaturat*, Feb. 17, 1976)
12. *Chaturat* (Feb. 17, 1976). Cited in Flood.
13. *Ibid.*
14. This account was derived by Flood from *Chaturat* (Aug. 24, 31, 1976).



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American equipment on display at Udon; Thai paratroops.

Letter From the Provinces

The following letter from a resident of Udonthani in Northeast Thailand to a Bangkok newspaper in April 1975 illustrates the impact on rural Thailand of U.S.-originated counterinsurgency agencies such as ISOC.

Letter to the Editor, *Athipat*, April 11-14, 1975
Udonthani

To *Athipat*

I have a nephew who is at present a student at Udonthani Teachers College. He is from the countryside; his parents are peasants, but he came to live with me to attend school. He joined other students at Udonthani Teachers College and the common people in protesting various injustices—the oppression of the people by government authorities and their exploitation by the capitalists...

As for my nephew and the other students, they all took these actions after they went out to see the condition of the villagers with their own eyes. The villagers told them the things that had happened to them. The students, the factory workers and the peasants each came to understand one another's situation, and they all realized that government officials and big businessmen had not been giving them the least bit of justice.

I myself learned only from the newspapers of how the students had led the peasants and workers to ask the government for relief from this oppression and injustice. I was afraid... so I called my nephew in and told him: dear nephew, since you are still a student, don't take any action... But my nephew said no. He said he could not allow national traitors to oppress the people... I didn't worry about it any more, since I was busy making a living for my family.

But it did not end there. Last month, some relatives of mine who live in Bangkok came up to Udon and told me that both police and Udon ISOC had sent agents to track me down and to investigate my background. Hearing this

made me upset. I can't imagine a family like mine being investigated by a Thai CIA...

The ISOC unit last year (1974) sent up officers from Bangkok to train government section-chief officials. This took place at the Education Center, Ninth Division, at Udon...

Indeed, it was this very ISOC unit that joined with the Governor of Udon in setting up a Thai Volunteer Village at the sub-district of Suwannakuha. They split up the families of the people on the charge that the village was communist, and they set up the Thai Volunteer Village nearby.

They bought weapons from Laos and sold them to people here. They bought them cheaply, and sold them expensively. The money, the cars and the people sent to purchase the weapons were all from the staff of ISOC at Udon. Once some of these people were arrested, but nothing but silence has resulted to this day.

ISOC is more dangerous than the communists. They take money from the Americans and forget who they are, killing their fellow Thai people. Those who join the staff of ISOC are all their own followers and relatives...

Their biggest plan is to make a coup. Therefore, they send groups of troublemakers, "volunteers," hoodlums and police to rob and burglarize, to steal oxen and buffaloes and various belongings of the people, causing trouble everywhere. When the people make reports to the police, the police do nothing...

If they can make a successful coup this time, their plan is to kill the college students, the people and the newspapermen, leaving no trace whatsoever. Moreover, the training of Village Scouts is also another of the schemes of ISOC. They have the family history of every scout that enters the training. This is just another trick of their psychological warfare.

Signed: Guardian of a Student from
Udonthani Teachers College

Translated by E. Thadeus Flood

Jit Phumisak: Profile of a Revolutionary Intellectual

by E. Thadeus Flood

Among the numerous figures in the decades-old Thai struggle for a just and equitable society free of domestic and foreign oppression, none looms more prominently than that of Jit Phumisak. Jit is only one of many Thai who took up the pen, and then the gun, in that struggle—a struggle that is, by virtue of the U.S. strategy of global hegemony, necessarily an anti-American struggle. For Americans, Jit's career is instructive if for no other reason than that it epitomizes the making of what the massive United States counterinsurgency apparatus mindlessly designates a "communist."

Jit Phumisak was born September 25, 1930 in Prachinburi Province. Jit was the son of a low-echelon government functionary. In 1950 he entered Chulalongkorn University, but "Chula" was a distinctly conservative, upper class university (it was one of two in the country) and Jit never quite seemed to fit there. He was a quiet young man but possessed of an intensely inquiring mind. His scholarly bent and his writing talents brought him to the editorship of the *Chula University Journal* in his third year at the university. It was in this position that Jit's questioning intellect and courageous pen first brought him into conflict with the conservative society around him.

His perceptive, critical essays in the *University Journal* on such sensitive issues as corruption in the Buddhist hierarchy, oppression of women in Thai society, and the like were unheard-of departures from the submissive traditions of arch-conservative Chula. Even though Jit demonstrated his innocence of any wrongdoing to authorities, he was suspended for two years. Jit's writings in the *University Journal* were confiscated and destroyed, for the authorities rightly recognized in his ideas and his questions the seeds of danger for elitist Thai society.

During his suspension, Jit lived by teaching at Intharasuksa School and by writing for the newspaper *Thai Mai* (New Thailand). The latter pursuit was perhaps a turning point in Jit's career, for it brought him into contact with the world of Thai journalists—a world that included some of the most politically aware and militant forces in Thai society in the 1950s. Also during this time he sharpened his writing skills while continuing his intensive study of languages begun at Chula, until he was extraordinarily fluent in English, French, Khmer and Pali-Sanskrit.

In 1955 Jit was permitted to reenter Chula University where he continued his studies in the humanities. From the recollections of those closest to him at this time, it seems clear that Jit did not follow the Chula tradition of blindly accepting professorial "wisdom." On the contrary, he took a critical,

independent and original stance of his own. At the same time, he deepened his understanding of Thailand's contemporary material and economic problems through his friendship with avant garde journalists, many of whom were involved in political agitation against America's hegemonic, counter-revolutionary policies in Asia at that time. Jit graduated from Chula in 1957. Because of his radical reputation he became the first student in the history of Chula who did not follow the custom of prostration and acceptance of his diploma from the hands of the King.

RICE WAITING FOR RAIN

*Like rice waiting for the rains
you'll not escape mold, but wither and die.
Life is so weary
Unmarked by worthy goals.
You may want them, but they're not for you.
That's why the farmer leaves his birthplace
Wandering with his children.
But our two legs have power
To walk in the light of the Red Sun
Shining to show us the way.
We can travel together to bring victory.
For our dreams of plentiful harvests
Capitalism must be destroyed.
To live as the rice waiting for rain
Means you too will wither and die.
How many people reap luxury from our toil.
We ride on the buffalo but they ride on man.
—Jit Phumisak
From Ronin No. 16, Winter 74-Spring 75*

Jit went on to pursue his studies at Prasanmit Teachers College while at the same time teaching at Phetburi Teachers College. 1957 was a year of transition and infighting among the military-police elites in Bangkok, and the political situation briefly loosened up, although rigid official anti-communism was already the hallmark of the Thai dictatorial state, and agitation was dangerous. Nonetheless, Jit was active politically, insofar as that was possible. He was a chief promoter, for example, of one of the most progressive journals of the day, *Siang Nisit* (Student Voice).

It was also during this 1957 interregnum between American-supported dictators in Bangkok that Jit was able to write and publish some of the works that mark him as the

